

Message Text

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TAGS: SOPN, OVIP (KISSINGER)

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT EVANS AND NOVAK OP-ED COLUMN WASHINGTON POST THURSDAY DECEMBER 30 HEADED "AN ELUSIVE PROMISE ON DEFENSE SPENDING."

2. ST. SIMONS ISLAND GA. - TWO YEARS OF SEEMING TO PROMISE AN UNATTAINABLE LOWERING OF DEFENSE SPENDING CAUGHT UP WITH JIMMY CARTER HERE AT PRECISELY THE WRONG MOMENT: JUST AS HE AND HIS PROSPECTIVE CABINET WERE STRESSING THE DESPERATE NEED TO ESTABLISH CREDIBILITY WITH THE PUBLIC.

3. TEN MINUTES BEFORE CARTER'S CABINET CONVENED FOR A PRE-INAUGURAL SESSION AT THIS COSTAL RESORT, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE-DESIGNATE HAROLD BROWN TOLD NEWSMEN IN A HOTEL LOBBY THE IMMUTABLE TRUTH: NET DEFENSE SPENDING UNDER PRESIDENT CARTER WILL RISE, NOT FALL - PERHAPS EVEN BEYOND INFLATION-
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ARY INCREASES.

4. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY A 6 1/2-HOUR CABINET SESSION WHERE LITTLE WAS SAID ABOUT DENENSE SPENDING BUT HEAVY EMPHASIS WAS PUT ON THE NECESSITY OF FULFILLING CAMPAIGN PROMISES TO COMBAT PUBLIC CYNICISM. SO, WHEN BROWN'S COMMENTS WERE

LEARNED, CARTER STAFFERS CLAIMED THE PRESIDENT-ELECT HAD NEVER PROMISED A SMALLER DEFENSE BUDGET.

5. BUT THE RECORD IS ABUNDANT WITH CARTER'S REPEATED CALLS TO CUT DEFENSE SPENDING BY DOLS 5 BILLION TO DOLS 7 BILLION SOME, THOUGH NOT ALL OF HIS STATEMENTS, CONTAIN SEMANTIC ESCAPE HATCHES. NEVERTHELESS, AVERAGE VOTERS COULD REASONABLY CONCLUDE ONLY THAT CARTER WAS PROMISING LESS, NOT MORE, SPENDING AT THE PENTAGON.

6. ACTUALLY, REDUCED DEFENSE SPENDING WAS NOT A MAJOR CARTER CAMPAIGN ISSUE AND WAS SELDOM MENTIONED AFTER HIS NOMINATION. THE PRESIDENT-ELECT HAS HAD EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITIES SINCE HIS ELECTION TO ACKNOWLEDGE, AS BROWN DID HERE, THE REALITIES OF DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS. INSTEAD, HE DOGGEDLY REPEATED THE DOLS 5-DOLS 7 BILLION CUT, REVEALING A STUBBORN STREAK THAT IN THIS CASE WAS SELF-DAMAGING.

7. TO REASSURE THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S POWERFUL LEFT WING EARLY IN HIS CAMPAIGN, CARTER URGED DEFENSE SPENDING REDUCTIONS WITHOUT EXPLAINING HOW THEY WOULD BE MADE - ONCE MENTIONING DOLS 15 BILLION BUT LATER SETTling ON THE DOLS 5-DOLS 7 BILLION RANGE. ALTHOUGH HIS WRITTEN TESTIMONY TO THE DEMOCRATIC PLATFORM COMMITTEE PROPOSED AN ANNUAL DOLS 5-DOL 7 BILLION REDUCTION NEITHER HE NOR HIS STAFF HAD ANY IDEA THEN WHERE THE CUTS WOULD BE MADE.

8. AFTER HIS NOMINATION, CARTER TALKED ONCE OR TWICE ABOUT ADMINISTRATIVE PENTAGON REFORMS SUGGESTED TO HIM BY THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION, ALL OF WHICH COULD NOT POSSIBLY YIELD

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DOLS 5 BILLION IN GROSS CUTS, MUCH LESS A DOLS 5 BILLION NET REDUCTION IN THE DEFENSE BUDGET. BETWEEN LABOR DAY AND ELECTION DAY, WE FIND NO RECORD OF CARTER REPEATING THE DOLS 5-DOLS 7 BILLION FIGURE.

9. ACCORDINGLY, THE STAGE WAS SET FOR THE PRESIDENT-ELECT TO LET THAT DOLS 5-DOLS 7 BILLION CUT QUIETLY SLIP FROM MEMORY AS JOHN F. KENNEDY'S "MISSILE GAP" DID IN 1961 - A MUCH EASIER TASK FOR CARTER SINCE MILITARY SPENDING WAS A FAR LESS PROMINENT CAMPAIGN ISSUE FOR HIM. BUT CARTER PASSED UP THE OPPORTUNITY.

10. ASKED BY WALTER CRONKITE OF CBS NOV. 29 WHETHER HE HAD LEARNED ANYTHING TO SHAKE HIS VIEW OF "LOTS OF FAT" IN DEFENSE, CARTER REPLIED: "NO, NO. I THINK MY OPINIONS HAVE BEEN CORROBORATED." WHILE ADDING, "I HAVE NOT HAD A CHANCE SINCE I'VE BEEN ELECTED" TO STUDY THE MILITARY, HE STUCK BY "A 5 PER CENT REDUCTION IN THE MILITARY BUDGET"- DOLS 5.6

BILLION OF THE CURRENT BUDGET, DOLS 6.1 BILLION IN NEXT YEAR'S.

11. ON DEC. 20 WHEN BROWN WAS NAMED SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, CARTER WAS ASKED WHETHER HE STILL PLANNED THAT DOLS 5-DOLS 7 BILLION CUT. "YES," THE PRESIDENT-ELECT REPLIED, "WE'LL START IMMEDIATELY." HE DID NOT POINT OUT THAT A NET DEFENSE REDUCTION WOULD BE POSSIBLE ONLY THROUGH MASSIVE MANPOWER CUTS THAT NOBODY EVEN CONTEMPLATES.

12. THESE HARD REALITIES WERE SUGGESTED BY BROWN IN A LOS ANGELES TIMES INTERVIEW PUBLISHED DEC. 27, PROMPTING QUESTIONING OF HIM BY REPORTERS HERE THE NEXT DAY. BROWN TOLD THEM SPENDING WILL RISE NEXT YEAR OVER THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR'S DOLS 113 BILLION, PERHAPS EXCEEDING INFLATIONARY INCREASES, AND ADDED HE WAS NOT SURE THAT EVEN A GROSS REDUCTION OF DOLS 5-DOLS 7 BILLION IN SAVINGS COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED. BEYOND WHAT BROWN SAID, IT MAY BE IMPOSSIBLE
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TO REDUCE PRESIDENT FORD'S DOLS 123 BILLION PENTAGON BUDGET FOR NEXT YEAR.

13. THIS PROBLEM WAS NOT DISCUSSED SERIOUSLY AS THE CABINET MEETING HERE AGREED ON THE NECESSITY TO KEEP FAITH WITH THE PUBLIC. ACCORDINGLY, PRESS SECRETARY JODY POWELL VIGOROUSLY DENIED THAT CARTER HAD EVER PROMISED AN ABSOLUTE REDUCTION IN DEFENSE SPENDING.

14. BUT EMERGING FROM DINNER WITH HIS CABINET THAT NIGHT, THE PRESIDENT-ELECT STILL WOULD NOT PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE UNCUTTABLE DEFENSE BUDGET. WHILE DECLARING "WE'LL SPEND WHATEVER IS NECESSARY TO DEFEND OUR COUNTRY," HE AGAIN INVOKED THAT MAGIC DOLS 5-DOLS 7 BILLION DEFENSE CUT WITHOUT ADDING THIS WOULD NOT LOWER OVERALL DEFENSE SPENDING. ANXIOUS THOUGH HE IS TO RESTORE GOVERNMENTAL CREDIBILITY, JIMMY CARTER SHOWED STUBBORN RELUCTANCE TO BE SEEN MOVING AWAY FROM A CAMPAIGN PLEDGE EVEN WHEN THAT IS INDEED THE CASE.
ROBINSON

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